

Alumni gather for virtual Homecoming,  
honor distinguished grads



# epistle

FALL 2020

The magazine of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

## Essential work

*Student workers vital  
to LSTC during pandemic*



# To lead through change

As these months under pandemic unravel without relief, the level of change we face has become intense. Things once unimagined are now second nature. Businesses, churches, and schools no longer operate as they once did. Rituals of social, family, and personal life are disrupted and rearranged. You can supply the examples. And while at first such changes are externally imposed as forces beyond our control, soon enough they also become internally generated, reactive responses to maintain our balance. The change from within echoes and amplifies that from without, and the result is exhausting.

Maybe this explains the pushback I see now when new ideas emerge. “There is already too much change, so we need a rest.” That presents a stark dilemma for our school, since formation relies on growth, critique, rethinking – that is, change. We claim to prepare visionary leaders to declare the good news, but no part of that mission happens without deep transformation. This is even more acute when faithful people are called to change that is painful – to dismantle white supremacy, to cease despoiling creation, to place equity for others above self-interest. Change like that during a pandemic? No one can bear it.

Well, not exactly. Those called to ministry, passionate for God’s promise, have courage for change, even when the pace is furious and the wounds apparent. I am thankful this includes our students. Yet I am also dismayed when the well-meaning dismiss such passion. “Your concerns are just trends, not ministry” they say – as if race or climate or justice were about anything less than love of God and neighbor, and thus deeply theological. “Don’t seek courage but instead compassion” they say – as if love of God and neighbor these days were not the most publicly bold and powerful thing anyone could ever enact.

How can we form leaders to embrace change without succumbing to pious complacency? For strange reasons, that

question led me to recall an idea called the “paradox of embedded agency.” Since leaders (those with “agency”) always work within complex systems of rules and roles (they are “embedded”), how can they ever imagine new ideas or changes, let alone get others to adopt them? Either a leader already buys into that structure and so cannot think outside the box, or everyone else does and so will never accept any change. That’s the paradox – and as perhaps a further paradox, we all know that at least some leaders are still able to lead toward change. How does that happen?

Research shows three things matter. First, effective leaders try to understand resistance to change, but in an appreciative way. Second, such leaders know they must make sense of a new direction so that others feel willing to follow along. Finally, they adeptly use local language and symbols in a patient process of persuasion and familiarization. These three behaviors – caring, teaching, and honoring – are basic for those who lead change, who don’t give in or give up. Without them, a leader may be the only person convinced of a particular course of action. With them, though, that leader can bring a whole community along for the ride.

And notice one thing more about this, something theological. Effective leaders who guide change do not sever compassion from courage. Neither did Jesus. He did not await calmer days or benign approval to speak and act as he did. In boldness he sought outcasts, to love the unlovely in a way that merged courage with compassion. This paradox – to care, to teach, to honor completely – grounded Jesus’ ministry as it does ours today. That’s a lesson worth sharing. It’s something the world awaits in these times of furious change. ❁



James Nieman

Effective leaders who guide change do not sever compassion from courage. Neither did Jesus. He did not await calmer days or benign approval to speak and act as he did.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "James Nieman".

James Nieman  
President



# epistle

FALL 2020 Vol. 51, No. 3

The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, a seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, forms visionary leaders to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ.

The *Epistle* is published three times a year by the Communications and Marketing Office. Printed on paper from responsibly managed forests with soy-based inks.

## EDITOR

Julie B. Sevig

## DESIGNER

Lorel K. Brown

## CONTRIBUTORS

Jan Boden  
Elizabeth Chentland  
James Nieman  
Julie Sevig

## ON THE COVER

Johncy Joseph

## PHOTO CREDITS

Jan Boden  
Elizabeth Chentland  
Vima Courvertier-Cruz  
Frantisek Janak, Jr.  
Emilie Pulver  
Julie B. Sevig  
Benjamin Taylor

Visit [www.lstc.edu](http://www.lstc.edu) for more information about LSTC's programs, conferences and special events.

## LSTC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gordon Braatz  
Susan Candea  
Paul Erickson  
Kristi Ferguson, *chairperson*  
Warren Geier  
Terry Goff, *vice chairperson*  
Emmanuel Jackson  
Bridget Jones  
Dale Landgren, *treasurer*  
Scott Leisinger  
Jane Mar  
Karen McClain  
Harry Mueller  
Rebecca Pallmeyer  
Maryjeanne Schaffmeyer  
Janette Schum, *secretary*

**Change of address?** Please email [advancement@lstc.edu](mailto:advancement@lstc.edu). Please give the address as it currently appears followed by your new address.



Lutheran School of  
Theology at Chicago

## FEATURES



**2** LSTC forms Antiracism Transformation Team

**3** LSTC, Augsburg University form partnership for five-year BA/MDiv degrees

**4** Alumni gather for virtual Homecoming, honor distinguished grads

**8** Essential work  
Student workers vital to LSTC during pandemic  
*By Julie B. Sevig*

**12** Stephen Styles:  
An ecumenical bridge builder  
*By Julie B. Sevig*

**13** Joy and challenge  
Katherine (Katie) Mueller finds both at seminary  
*By Julie B. Sevig*

**14** From Iceland to Chicago to study liturgy  
*By Jan Boden*

**16** Offering grace, guidance & compassion  
Brooke Petersen leans on her experience providing online therapy to meet students where they are  
*By Jan Boden*

**19** Cheryl Stewart Pero made ELCA history

**20** Colleagues remember Paul Landahl's influence on LSTC

**24** Chris Huang new director of institutional effectiveness, registrar

## DEPARTMENTS

**2** Up Front

**18** In Memoriam

**21** Faculty & Staff Accomplishments

**22** Class Notes

**24** Transitions

**24** Events

**25** Life at LSTC

## Welcome to our new look!

Even before you opened this magazine, you should have already noticed our new look.

The *Epistle* has not been sitting around in its sweatpants eating junk food during this pandemic; it's been getting a makeover.

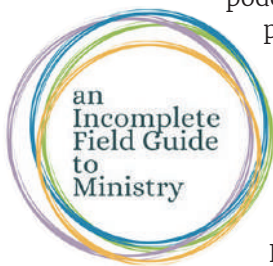
I hope you enjoy the transformation to a more open, readable and engaging layout. We will continue to make subtle changes in content and design as we bring the stories of LSTC into your home and into your hands. As always, we are grateful for your feedback. 🌸



Julie B. Sevig, editor  
[julie.sevig@lstc.edu](mailto:julie.sevig@lstc.edu)

## LSTC professors host new podcast

When LSTC professors Kimberly Wagner and Marvin Wickware Jr. were looking for a new way to collaborate across their courses, a podcast became the perfect vehicle.



Thanks to a grant from the Lyn C. and Stewart Herman Jr. Innovation Fund, they launched An Incomplete Field Guide to Ministry ([buzzsprout.com/1345783](http://buzzsprout.com/1345783)).

Each week, they cover topics relevant to their course, but an even wider audience is enjoying their wisdom and banter, as well as those of their weekly guests (from LSTC and beyond). New episodes are posted weekly. 🌸

## LSTC forms Antiracism Transformation Team

LSTC has formed a 29-member Antiracism Transformation Team (ATT) that meets monthly to develop an action plan to move LSTC toward becoming an antiracist and interculturally competent institution.

The team is 51% Black, indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC), and includes students, alumni, faculty, administrators, staff and representatives from two Chicago area seminaries. It is guided by Chicago Regional Organizing for Antiracism (Chicago ROAR), which has for the past four years offered antiracism workshops for faculty, staff and students as part of a multiyear partnership with LSTC.

"LSTC holds 'being attentive to diversity' as one of its values, but we still have not aligned our institutional practices with that value, especially in terms of confronting racism and white supremacy," said James Nieman, president. "I am grateful that this team will do a thorough analysis and make recommendations for transforming the school."

Institutional transformation teams usually meet in person but the global pandemic has meant that LSTC's team meets via Zoom.

"We would prefer to meet in person," said Vima Couvertier-Cruz, admissions recruiter and acting international student services coordinator, who is also the liaison for the ATT. "But we are undeterred in moving ahead with this important work, which is more urgent than ever. Chicago ROAR is developing new innovative online

tools and our team will be one of the first to use them."

Ismael Calderon, MDiv student, said, "I have observed an openness and slow awareness of this problem among the student community and institution staff. We must continue to heal the wounds generated by blind institutional racism from all angles of the community."

PhD student Denise Rector said, "I believe this institution is still operating on the idea that addressing racism is about diversity, as opposed to addressing racism by sharing power and leveling inequities; that the institution is more concerned about 'not seeming racist' (as much of America is, unfortunately) instead of actively sacrificing power to be anti-racist."

Janelle Neubauer (2017, MDiv), who joins the team from her ministry in Rwanda, said, "My first observation of racism was in the sheer ignorance and defensiveness of students like myself who rebuffed the idea that we were part of such a structure. Unfortunately, we are taught to believe that we know ourselves better than anyone else ever could, but it became apparent to me that I, along with my other white classmates, understood very little of our impact in spite of our 'best' intentions."

The team will learn how to conduct an audit of the ways LSTC perpetuates racism, and what the major concerns are within the school and ways to change them. Their work will result in an action plan in Spring 2021. 🌸





Amber Kalina shows off her connection to Augsburg University while at the churchwide offices. Kalina, an LSTC student and Augsburg graduate, is excited about the new partnership between the schools.

## LSTC, Augsburg University form partnership for five-year BA/MDiv degrees

**L**STC and Augsburg University in Minneapolis, Minn., are launching a five-year BA/MDiv degree called the Public Church Scholars. Students in this program will complete two degrees in five years: a bachelor of arts in Theology and Public Leadership from Augsburg and a master of divinity from LSTC.

Esther Menn, dean of academic affairs, calls the program “an innovative and promising way to re-envision theological education and formation of pastors.”

The goal of this program is to prepare intentional leaders of a multiracial, multiethnic public church. Students will explore theological education, leadership formation, and experiential learning in an internship in preparation to be public leaders in the church.

Elements of the new Public Church Scholars program include paid four-year part-time contextual learning and internship, supportive cohort of peers, training in equity and inclusion, cultural competency and vocational discernment; generous

financial aid; spiritual direction, life coaching and professional mentors; clinical pastoral education; and accompaniment through the candidacy process for ordination in the ELCA.

Amber Kalina, an LSTC student now on internship, attended Augsburg and sees advantages of this program. In fact, she wishes it had been an option for her. She chose Augsburg because of its Youth and Family Ministry degree, and her experience with Augsburg’s Youth Theology Institute.

“One of the reasons I picked LSTC was because I perceived a similar atmosphere of challenge and nurture that I had experienced at Augsburg,” she said. “I wanted a seminary education that would continue to push me deeper into my faith, not just allow me to remain comfortable in what I came to learn at Augsburg.”

Both Augsburg and LSTC form leaders who make a difference inside and outside the walls of the church by being deeply rooted in their communities, she said.

“From attending Augsburg

as an undergrad and LSTC as a graduate student, I feel that I have been equipped for ministry that is deeply relational, grounded in the gospel, and geared toward making a difference in the lives of people and the world God made.” ❁

### Correction

**I**n the Commencement section of the Summer issue of the *Epistle* (pages 6-7), Vickie Johnson’s name and photo were inadvertently left out. We apologize for the error and offer Vickie our sincere regret and congratulations on her MDiv degree. A corrected version of this issue of the *Epistle* can be found at [lstedu](http://lstedu) under News and Summer *Epistle*. ❁



Vickie Johnson

# HOMECOMING

## Alumni gather for virtual Homecoming, honor distinguished grads

By Julie B. Sevig

**M**ore than 150 LSTC alumni gathered for a first-ever virtual Homecoming Oct. 14–15 that included Zoom gatherings, class reunions, intentional learning with faculty, worship, an opportunity to sit in on classes, and the annual Distinguished Alumni Award ceremony (a tradition since 1974).

Stan Peterson ('63) sent a thank-you response to LSTC, saying Homecoming was great, especially considering the challenges of the time.

"It's been 57 years since I graduated, and a lot of changes have taken place within the church and the seminary. But I came away feeling that LSTC is alive and well, continuing to make a strong witness for our Living Lord, and being a great resource for the church," he wrote.

Three alumni, Kyle Severson, Angela Shannon and Troy Hedrick, received Distinguished Alumni Awards in a ceremony. Sara Olson-Smith (2006, MDiv), alumni board, and Michael Fick (2004, MDiv), alumni board chair, served as emcees.

In her welcome Olson-Smith noted some had dressed up for the occasion, and asked participants to

This evening celebrates the challenges and joys, and deep, faithful callings to ministry. Ministry takes many forms.

**James Nieman,**  
*LSTC president*



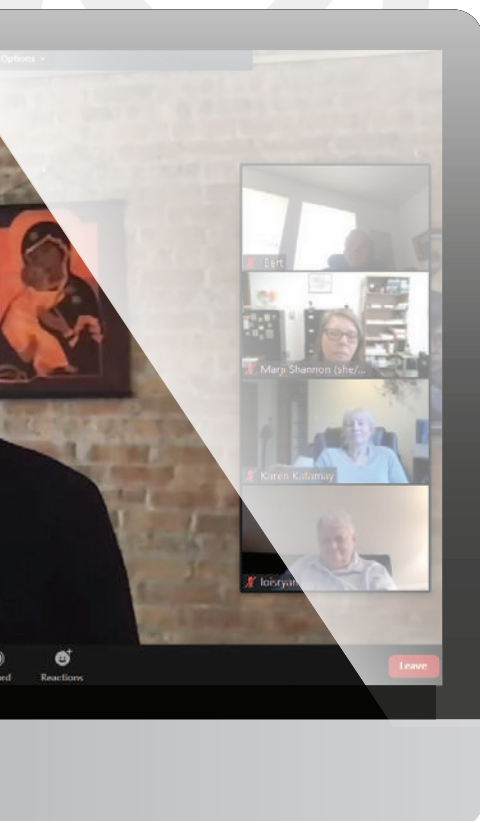
Kyle Severson preaches for evening prayer during Homecoming.

imagine being in the lower level of the library where such celebrations are normally held—yet not with today's reminders to "remember to mute yourselves." Though not ideal, the virtual gathering did give alumni near and far a chance to participate in Homecoming activities—especially worship (at which Shannon and Severson preached) and the ceremony. Participants were encouraged to use the chat feature to identify what year they graduated.

In his greeting, President James Nieman said that of the three graduate schools he has served, LSTC is the only one that recognizes a range of ministry by honoring several alumni, not just one. "This evening celebrates the challenges and joys, and deep, faithful callings to ministry," he said. "Ministry takes many forms." 🌿



# COMING



## Kyle Severson (2015, MDiv)

**K**yle Severson received the Emerging Voice Award, given to someone who shows excellence in ministry in their first 3-10 years. Severson has demonstrated a commitment to raising up and equipping new leaders for the church.

He served on and later chaired the Metropolitan Chicago Synod's candidacy committee and supervised contextual education students at St. Philip Lutheran Church, Glenview, Ill., where he was pastor. He led that congregation to become Reconciling in Christ. He currently serves as associate to the bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, where he focuses on

candidacy and relates to the North and Near West Conferences.

He is an active member and contributor to Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries and Proclaim, advocating for the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people in the life of the church.

In accepting his award, Severson thanked specific mentors who inspired him and who he has tried to emulate, including fellow nominee Hedrick, who served as his spiritual director during seminary. Hedrick had given Severson his heavy, black clergy cloak to remind him that God's grace covers him, and that the call of the church is "a heavy weight but a joyous call." 🌸

Kyle Severson baptizes a baby while pastor of St. Philip Lutheran Church, Glenview. Julie Grafe (2020, MDiv) is assisting minister.



Severson presides at a baptism.

# HOMEC

## Angela Shannon (1996, MDiv)

**A**ngela Shannon received the Called to Lead Award, given to those visibly answering the call to prophetic ministry in the wider church. She has been a mentor and support for many

women in the church, particularly women of color.

Since 2011 Shannon has been a Benedictine Oblate of Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Beech Grove, Ind. For more than 20 years she has been involved in ecumenical and interfaith conversations in the U.S. and abroad. She is an advocate for LGBTQIA+ individuals

and other historically oppressed people. She currently serves as pastor of All Saints Lutheran Church, Bowie, Md.

Shannon was director of student life at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.; associate pastor of King of Glory Lutheran Church, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas; and intentional interim for congregations in need of healing and revitalization. She is the national vice president of the African Descent Lutheran Association.

When introducing her, Olson-Smith outlined many of the items on her vitae, and her ability to



Angela Shannon takes to the street—for good health with GirlTrek, and to stand with Planned Parenthood.



When you have done all that you think you can in the names of Jesus, you can do more.

Angela Shannon

be forthright and navigate the landmines of systems needing to be dismantled. She also spoke about Shannon's participation in Girl Trek that focuses on inspiring young women to walk for health, and on Shannon's passion for swimming.

Shannon, whose first career was as a social worker, calls ministry the "best worst thing I've ever done." Though she isn't sure about her own "prophetic voice" as the award suggests, she promised to "continue to work and pray and challenge on behalf of those who for whatever reason are unable to." She said she was "formed and shaped" by so many, including family and friends, professors, the monastery, and her current congregation.

"To those watching [including students], fight the good fight," she said. "And when you have done all that you think you can in the name of Jesus, you can do more." ❀



Above: Troy and Jan Hedrick. Right: Troy in young pastor years.



## Troy Hedrick (1963, MDiv)

**T**roy Hedrick received the Lifetime Service Award posthumously. He was known as a kind and patient teacher, a mentor to many. He served four congregations throughout Illinois. While serving St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Park Ridge, he served on the board of Advocate Lutheran General Hospital, chairing the committee on medical ethics. He served as vice president for community outreach at Trinity Healthcare System in the quad-cities.

Hedrick retired in 1999 but remained active on the board of Crusader Clinics in Rockford, Ill. He volunteered as a patient advocate and was part of a group called "No One Dies Alone" at Swedish American Hospital, also in Rockford. He received the Spirit of Caring Award from

Crusader Health in 2012.

Seated between her two children, Hedrick's wife, Janis, received the award on behalf of her husband. She recalled a 1963 ordination sermon she and her husband heard H. Grady Davis give, which had stayed with them—a singular piece of advice for the friend who was being ordained: "Feed my sheep."

"Troy did that," she said, describing the diverse flock he had in his ministry and naming those with academic expertise, teaching ability and faithful lives who had equipped him to feed sheep.

To those listening, she said, "There are many more sheep out there waiting to be fed and I know that there will be many who will be able to do that. The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago will continue to equip men and women to feed those sheep... We thank you for the honor that you bestowed on Troy—Troy who fed the sheep." ❀









# Essential work

## Student workers vital to LSTC during pandemic

By Julie B. Sevig

**W**hen COVID-19 arrived and stay-at-home orders were put in place, there was a steady exodus of employees and students from the LSTC building. But people still needed to keep buildings operating, especially for those who live on or near campus and depend on the seminary for daily needs.

It wasn't long before the names of three students rose to the top of the list of those who have helped keep things going: Johncy Joseph, Di (Karen) Kang and Manoj Kumar Gunthoti.

### **Johncy Joseph takes on new Refectory roles**

Johncy Joseph, pursuing a PhD in church history, is a familiar and friendly face in the Refectory. He works the cash register, but also in office administration. Early in the pandemic, the Refectory closed. When it reopened, he became essential.

"Though it was an additional

Johncy Joseph, facing camera, is a familiar and friendly face in the Refectory, where he now also serves as administrative assistant.

responsibility, it wasn't a burden at all for me," Joseph said.

He credits Lena Washington, director of dining services, with encouraging and supporting him and the entire staff.

"Johncy is a phenomenal employee," said Washington, calling him "dependable and kind" with a "strong willingness to learn new things."

Before beginning his MDiv studies in 2004 Joseph worked in five different companies in India, so he is no stranger to office work. Switching from in-house dining to a "take and delivery" option in the Refectory had challenges, but was a smooth transition, he said.

"My only concern was the exposure to people amid COVID-19 but the precautions adopted by LSTC and the Refectory gave me the confidence to work," he said. His parents and others were initially concerned since they know his work regularly puts him in contact with others, but he assured them of safety measures.

He says Romans 8:28 (NIV) has been his bedrock: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who





have been called according to his purpose.”

“Even amid the pandemic, good things are happening,” Joseph said. “There are a lot of things that this deadly pandemic has taught me. Life is uncertain but there is always a little ray of hope that will keep you going.”

When the government declared a ban on international students, anxiety was heightened, but “the LSTC family stood with us in support. It was so heart-touching and comforting and it strengthened my bonds with the school,” he said, adding that the online fellowship from around the globe made him feel “a kind of connectedness I’ve never felt in my whole life.”

#### **Di Kang gets the distance prize for working remotely**

PhD student Di (Karen) Kang has been helping LSTC through the pandemic—from China. She has

For PhD student Manoj Kumar Gunthoti, the biggest adjustment during the pandemic is the quiet work environment.

been with her parents in Northern China since January when she returned home to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

At first, “everything seemed normal and peaceful,” as they shopped and prepared to celebrate. “Soon, we started to hear about this unidentified type of pneumonia, which was similar to SARS, and was spreading in Wuhan.”

Her husband Benjamin Taylor, also an LSTC PhD student, joined her in late January. They were to return to the U.S. Feb. 2, but the U.S. imposed travel restrictions and flights were canceled. Restrictions remain in place, so she doesn’t know when she’ll be able to return (her visa expired and the U.S. Embassy in China is closed).

She describes these months as a “mix of anxiety and blessings.” The rising numbers of cases early in the year, the uncertainty of when she can return, fear of losing her student status and job in LSTC’s IT department, concern about her academic books and



Di (Karen) Kang, PhD student in Old Testament who has been helping LSTC through the pandemic from China, says her biggest challenge to working remotely is the time difference.

other library resources, limited Internet access because Google and other western websites are blocked in China. And to top it off, concern about her husband's visa status in China so he can return to the U.S.

"It makes me feel that my studies, my life and my work have been put on pause, and I do not have any control, nor can I do anything to change my situation," she said.

But her list of blessings is also long, such as being with her parents. They, in turn, have gotten to know her husband (Kang and Taylor married this year in China). She has enjoyed living where she grew up, and immersing herself in familiar food, language and lifestyle. She has also appreciated the support of the LSTC community, her advisor Klaus-Peter Adam and her work supervisor Martha Stocker, who advocated for her to continue working from China.

Stocker credits Kang with staying up late to meet with the IT team, learning the management system, and supporting LSTC while it transitioned to online learning. Kang's work includes handling IT requests, solving problems related to hardware and software, setting up AV for meetings, and serving as the teaching and learning technologist. Much of her work supports faculty and students.

"The biggest challenge is the time difference. I need to stay up late or get up in the middle of the night or early morning," Kang said, adding that she worries about responding to emails in a timely manner.

But she marvels at what has been possible, such as being teaching assistant for Barbara Rossing's "From Genesis to Revelation" class: "I would never have thought I would TA from across the world."

### Quiet campus biggest adjustment for Manoj Kumar Gunthoti

Being thrust into the role of essential worker has been a challenge for Manoj Kumar Gunthoti, a PhD student in Systematic Theology. But the biggest adjustment is the quiet work environment.

"Usually, we will be surrounded by, or come across, 30 to 50 people per day when we come to class or work," he said. "Suddenly I'm seeing only five to 10 people and unable to shake hands or hug others."

New responsibilities required him to be on-ground staff for the development of IT infrastructure. He was a key player in getting the seminary ready for remote, hybrid, synchronous/asynchronous classes and office spaces. He also offers support for existing technology and software—an increase in his own responsibilities but also for the entire IT team.

Martha Stocker, also his supervisor, recognized his IT skills early on, and said, "We need to hire this guy!" And when she had the opportunity, she did.

"He helped put technology in the classrooms and knows loads about computers." But his real story, she says, is his journey from India five years ago. His family has been here so long the children don't want to go back to India for college, and he is worried about his extended family back home and the toll the virus is taking there.

Stocker has depended on Gunthoti for much onsite work, critical employment for him since scholarship support for both he and his wife Smitha, also an LSTC

PhD student, has dropped off as the bills pile up.

"This is ministry for him," said Stocker about Gunthoti, who is ordained. "He wants to stay in IT, and is loving it and learning a lot," as he and others have streamlined a system at LSTC that she said was 20 years behind. "They have brought us into the right century."

"Manoj has the initiative to do things quickly," she said, which can be challenging considering old student housing buildings and the main building hallways that needed wires, and classrooms that needed "100 times faster" booster units for this new way of teaching.

From their arrival, he says LSTC has been a blessing: "The love, warmth and care we received as a family from administration, faculty,

staff and students have always encouraged and developed a sense of belonging that gives me strength and responsibility to do things that I did not imagine doing."

But that feeling of belonging is difficult amid social distance protocol. Still, he says life evolves and "we are learning to live

close in heart and have caring conversations with masks and distance."

The pandemic has taught him the gift and frailty of life.

"We live so close to death but never realize our vulnerability in our day-to-day life," he said, adding that he and his family miss the community, social and spiritual life that normally enriches their life.

Still, it is "never a mistake to look for your safety and your neighbor's safety... we should strive to live with responsibility, humility, love and integrity." 🌸

We are learning to live close in heart and have caring conversations with masks and distance.

Manoj Kumar Gunthoti, PhD student in Systematic Theology

By Julie B. Sevig

**S**tephen Styles was born into, and raised, in the Black Pentecostal Church. As an adult, he embraced Lutheranism at Shekinah Chapel Lutheran Church. He has a dual membership there and in the New Life Covenant Church of Humboldt Park in Chicago.

“I believe part of my calling is to be an ecumenical bridge builder and serve as a bridge between the very disparate world views, theological traditions, and faith expressions of ELCA Lutheranism and Pentecostalism in general and the Black American Christian experience in particular,” he said.

His interest in seminary



Stephen Styles, right, is grateful for the leadership of Yehiel Curry, left, bishop of the Chicago Metropolitan Synod. “God has used him in many ways to help me learn and grow,” Styles said.

## STEPHEN STYLES

# An ecumenical bridge builder

education goes back to his early teen years, he says. He started thinking seriously about LSTC when he met Scott Chalmers, dean of student services, at a Metropolitan Chicago Synod Assembly.

“We sat in the lobby for what had to be at least an hour and talked Bible and I loved it,” Styles said. “He told me seminary was possible for me even though I didn’t think it was. As years progressed, I was finally able to enroll as a very part-time special student.”

Since 2010, Styles has worked at Musical Arts Institute wearing two hats: teaching artist (drums and percussion) and director of programing. His teaching schedule has been reduced to make more time for studies. This is his first semester as a full-time MDiv student.

He said he can’t overstate the leadership and investment of Yehiel Curry, bishop of the Chicago Metropolitan Synod, who was part of the TEEM program and an LSTC

student. “God has used him in many ways to help me learn and grow,” he said. “My desire for seminary training was alive in me well before I came to Shekinah though.”

“It’s been a challenging journey, but I’m grateful for what I’ve learned so far and the opportunity to continue to learn and also contribute to our LSTC community.”

He admits the pandemic and remote learning have made him struggle more than he anticipated.

“It’s tough not having full access to the library, in-person

classes and study groups—which I strongly prefer and thrive in more—and trying to manage work, parenting, spousing, and trying to study for and be present for class. Doing all that while confined to home with small kids is hard. But by God’s grace I believe I can make it and I’m going to keep pressing forward.”

Styles loves to play drums, work with youth, and spend time with his family, his wife Tesha and their daughter Naimah, 6, and son Stephen (Stevie), 4. 🌸

**It’s been a challenging journey, but I’m grateful for what I’ve learned so far and the opportunity to continue to learn and also contribute to our LSTC community.**

Stephen Styles



By Julie B. Sevig

**T**he first thing Katherine (Katie) Mueller wants you to know about her is that she laughs a lot. She loves to dance and sing, eat good food in good company, walk and write. In her journalism writing prior to seminary, the column she wrote called “Up-Clothes and Personal,” about how people’s dress intersect with their identities, is her favorite.

Mueller, whose undergraduate degree is in music and religious studies, is from Charleston, Ill. Her home congregation is Trinity Lutheran Church in Appleton, Wis.

Her call to ministry came at age 8, but she cried when she found out her family’s conservative church wouldn’t ordain her.

“As a queer woman, I assumed I’d have to follow these feelings through other means.

“It wasn’t until I started to meet bad-ass ordained women throughout college that I realized

Katherine (Katie) Mueller says her call to ministry came at age 8, but she cried when she found out their conservative church wouldn’t ordain her.

## I’m overjoyed to be surrounded by people who want to talk about faith and spirituality at a moment’s notice. Who knew I wasn’t the only one?

Katherine (Katie) Mueller

the image I had of what a minister looked like was much too narrow. This quickly led to a surprising and terrifying realization that there might be room for me at seminary.”

The social justice she did throughout college with her home congregation helped her realize that the time to go to seminary was now, despite, and perhaps because of, the challenges our world currently faces.

LSTC’s emphasis on community and public church appealed to her, and seminary life so far has been joyful and challenging. Balancing classwork from her cozy apartment via Zoom is an adjustment, but she’s thankful for classmates who are on the same challenge course.

“I’m overjoyed to be surrounded by people who want to talk about faith

and spirituality at a moment’s notice. Who knew I wasn’t the only one?”

She wants to cultivate strength within intergenerational religious communities, having worked with emerging adults who have felt abandoned, traumatized, or disenchanted by the church, but who want to engage in sacraments and ritual safely.

“I believe that music, storytelling and deep listening are powerful ways in which communities can work to find this healing,” she said.

“I also believe that God calls us to be in intentional relationship to the land and that healing our relationship to nature helps us to heal with each other. Environmental justice is social justice and is the work I’m passionate about doing.” 🌱



# Joy and challenge

Katherine (Katie) Mueller finds both at seminary

# From Iceland to Chicago to study liturgy



*By Jan Boden*

**E**cumenical Doctor of Ministry student Thorgeir Arason will tell you that sometimes you just have to go ahead with your plans, even when the timing is not perfect. In August, he and his wife packed up their three children and moved from Iceland to Chicago for his sabbatical year.

“I don’t know if I would have had the same opportunity or family circumstances a year from now,” Arason said.

He originally was accepted to begin the program in fall 2019 but was not granted a sabbatical from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland. By the time he got the sabbatical this year, the U.S. government had stopped

granting visas because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Still, the family made all the arrangements to accept the opportunity. They rented their apartment. His wife left her job. Someone else would serve his parish in Eglissladdir in his absence.

In mid-July they learned that the U.S. government would allow them to receive visas. They immediately started the process. One month later, they were in the U.S. “jumping into the uncertainty of the pandemic.”

“I am so grateful to be here, to have the opportunity to study in another country at an institution with high standards. I applied to other programs in the U.S, but this is the one I really wanted to attend. It has a concentration in

liturgy and because it is ecumenical I am taking classes at Catholic Theological Union and McCormick as well as LSTC.”

He admits that not being able to go into the main building and having limited opportunities to build relationships with other students is a bit frustrating. He studies mostly online from their campus apartment while his wife assists their first- and fourth-graders taking Chicago Public School classes online.

Ordained for 11 years, Arason describes himself as a “typical parish pastor,” who leads Sunday worship and liturgies associated with life cycles. With two other pastors, he serves 2,500 people in 14 parishes in a rural area of East Iceland. Most of these very small





Ecumenical Doctor of Ministry student Thorgeir Arason, right, moved to Chicago in August after the U.S. government granted them visas. "It's great for the family to be together," he said. "If the pandemic has done a good thing, it's brought families together."

churches do not have services every Sunday. Parishioners come to the larger church for regular services.

"I'm in a quite different context. It is part of the Scandinavian National Church. My congregation is quite heterogeneous. It's 99% white. Of course there is diversity of gender, sexuality, ability. The experience of living in Chicago to experience more diversity is enriching," Arason said.

He is interested in the interaction of worship and theology which has him "diving into practical theology." This semester he has an independent study on eucharistic liturgy with Ben Stewart, Gordon A. Braatz

## Living in Chicago to experience more diversity is enriching.

**Thorgeir Arason**

Associate Professor of Worship. They were able to meet in person a few times. Arason hopes for more in-person visits with faculty members.

Is the pandemic influencing his thinking about liturgy?

"Ask me in six months," he said. "We just don't know how the pandemic will shape the liturgy and other forms of social communion."

He is keenly observing how U.S. clergy are responding to all that is happening in the country

and the world. The Arason family has been attending in-person worship at Augustana Lutheran Church, near LSTC. That, too, is an

atypical experience due to the pandemic safety protocols.

He expresses, again, how grateful he is for the opportunity to be here, even with the challenges. The Arason family has been able to enjoy some of the amenities and sites of Chicago. Now they are preparing for the Chicago winter, which will be colder than Iceland's.

"It's great for the family to be together," he said. "If the pandemic has done a good thing, it's brought families together." ❁





# Offering grace, guidance & compassion

Brooke Petersen leans on her experience providing online therapy to meet students where they are

*By Jan Boden*

**W**hat is it like to start a new job in the middle of pandemic? Brooke Petersen (2006, MDiv) talks about the experience with remarkable cheerfulness and gratitude. She is LSTC's new director of the MA and MDiv programs, coordinator of candidacy and lecturer in Pastoral Theology.

"It's been a good adjustment because I know the community so well," she said. In addition to being an alum, Petersen has been a guest lecturer and auxiliary faculty member at LSTC for several years.

She added, "I'm glad that I had over four months doing therapy sessions online eight hours a day before I started this position at LSTC. Providing online therapy helped me counter how we often negatively perceive body language and emotions online. When I started teaching this semester and meeting with students via Zoom I was grateful to have this experience to draw from."

Brooke Petersen (2006, MDiv), is LSTC's new director of the MA and MDiv programs, coordinator of candidacy and lecturer in Pastoral Theology.



Petersen admits that it can be a challenge to get to know students when the only way to do that is on the computer. It is especially hard to know when they are struggling.

"I am so grateful that students have reached out to me to tell me what they're going through even beyond just the candidacy process. It may be internship or CPE or Ministry in Context or something else entirely. I want to hear about them and their lives," Petersen said.

"It is such a privilege to work with students. I remember being nervous about internship when I was a student. It is such a gift to be present in those situations, to access those past parts of myself and to be on the other side of that process, knowing that it is a growth process."

### **Focus on religious trauma connects with students**

Petersen's experience as a therapist seems well-suited for relating to LSTC students who are LGBTQIA+. Her dissertation is on religious trauma within the Queer community. A good portion of her therapy caseload is people dealing with religious trauma in their own lives or the lives of people they love. Most have never found a place to explore that trauma.

"Whenever I talked about religious trauma in classes I taught at LSTC, people got very excited. People here have seen or experienced trauma and they are willing to do the hard work of addressing it," she said.

"By getting this far in their call, LGBTQIA+ students have already developed skills and strengths to carry them through. Many of these students know more about

religious trauma than most people. Here, at LSTC, we will talk honestly about the future. Here we will celebrate their gifts. And this is a place for lament if the church is not always ready for their gifts."

Petersen compares the work of preparing for rostered ministry to other times of transition. "When working with people preparing for marriage or end of life, there's a liminal space. Are we going to make this transition to the other side? It is terrifying and beautiful. Sometimes people get too scared or overwhelmed to make the transition. This is a similar opportunity."

### **Offering grace to self and others in a time of Covid**

When she was a student at LSTC, Petersen never imagined that one day she would return as a member of the faculty.

"I came to LSTC right out of college," she said. "I thought my professors here were so brilliant and I got so much out of classes. I never thought that I had the stuff to 'hang' with them!"

Now some of those professors are her colleagues who have warmly welcomed her to the faculty and her new roles at LSTC.

This semester Petersen is teaching a class she's never taught before, Counseling as Pastoral Care. She got the idea for it from a student in her course on pastoral theology and mental illness. The new course goes beyond theology to methods for implementing counseling into one's pastoral ministry.

Reflecting on how pastors are doing counseling in the time of Covid, Petersen said that it is following many of the models

**What we've been dealing with during a pandemic is an ongoing low-level crisis for such a long period of time that our short-term surge capacity is naturally depleted.**

**Brooke Petersen**

used for worship. Some are doing counseling online, others by phone and, in some cases, in-person.

"I recently read an article about 'surge capacity.' It's the internal 'stuff' that we dip into in a crisis," she explained. "Clergy types are often good in a short-term crisis because we have dealt with short term crises throughout our ministry. But what we've been dealing with during a pandemic is an ongoing low-level crisis for such a long period of time that our short-term surge capacity is naturally depleted. We need to name and normalize that in order to offer ourselves and each other grace and compassion."

As someone who is juggling teaching, directing, counseling, assisting children who are doing online school and supporting a spouse who is also teaching online, she is relying on and offering that grace and compassion. 🌸

## Edward Walter Amend

**1931–2020** | *Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary Class of 1955*  
Edward Walter Amend, 89, of Cedar Falls, Iowa, died June 6. A service was to be held at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Cedar Falls. He was a mission pastor in Tulsa, Okla., and professor at the University of Northern Iowa. He is survived by his wife Dalila, three children, five grandchildren and a great-grandson.

## Ronald (Ron) Gene Alexander

**1936–2020** | *Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary Class of 1963*  
Ronald “Ron” Gene Alexander, 83, of Waverly, Iowa, died Aug. 3 in Waterloo, Iowa. There was no service. He was a professor in the philosophy and religion department at Wartburg College until his retirement in 2014. He is survived by his daughter, five grandchildren and one great-grandchild. He was preceded in death by his wife Virginia and a son.

## John (Jack) Anderson

**1939–2020** | *Class of 1969*  
John William “Jack” Anderson, 80, of Chatham, Ill., died April 20. A private graveside ceremony was held at Roselawn Memorial Park in Springfield, Ill. He served congregations in Illinois, Michigan and Florida. He is survived by his wife Janice, a daughter and five grandchildren. He was preceded in death by a son.

## Catherine I.H. Braasch

**1948–2020** | *Class of 2003*  
Catherine I.H. Braasch, 72, of rural Smithfield, Ind., died Sept. 10. A funeral service was held via Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church (Smithfield) Facebook page on Sept. 22. Braasch served as executive director of the Women of the ELCA and worked in ELCA synod and mission development. She then served congregations in the North American Lutheran Church (NALC), its seminary, and was a bishop nominee in 2019 for the NALC. Braasch was preceded in death by her husband and daughter.

## Curtis Benson

**1937–2020** | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1964*  
Curtis E. Benson, 83, died Aug. 6 in Sioux City, Iowa. A private family funeral service was held at St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church of Holstein, Iowa. He is survived by his wife Marilyn, four children and grandchildren.

## Donald Luther Conrad

**1929–2020** | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1954*  
Donald Conrad, 90, died June 4 in Lawrence, Kan. A memorial service was to be held later. Conrad served congregations in Minnesota, Kansas and Missouri, and was Lutheran campus pastor at the University of Kansas. He also led several Lutheran World Relief tours. He is survived by his wife Janice, four children, 12 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

## Louis O. Dorn

**1928–2020** | *ThD 1980*  
Louis O. Dorn, 92, died July 16. A funeral was July 25 at St. John Lutheran Church, Country Club Hills, Ill. He served in the Philippines as a missionary for 21 years, first as a pastor and then as a translator, including the production of a Tagalog hymnal. He worked for the United Bible Societies, New York City. He was preceded in death by his wife Erna, and is survived by his children and grandchildren.

## George W. Fisher

**1932–2020** | *Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary Class of 1959*  
George W. Fisher, 88, died May 1. He served parishes in the Midwest and in Texas, Tennessee and Georgia, and as interim and supply pastor during retirement in South Carolina. He was also called to teach at Minnehaha Academy in Minneapolis, Minn. He is survived by his wife Mary, four children and four grandchildren.

## Linda Kersten

**1943–2020** | *Class of 1996*  
Linda Kersten, 76, died May 24 in Elgin, Ill. A memorial service was held privately at Geneva (Ill.) Lutheran Church. She is survived by her four children, step-children and grandchildren. She served congregations in Iowa and Wisconsin.

## Muriel Jean Lippert

**1960–2020** | *Class of 1987*  
Muriel Jean Lipper, 60, of Bismarck, N.D., died June 25. A livestreamed funeral service was July 3 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Bismarck. She served parishes in Wing and Williston, N.D., and helped start a daycare and worked across denominational lines to form a feeding ministry, earning her 2015 community achievement entrepreneur of the year. She is survived by two children.

## Earl H. Meissner

**1928–2020** | *Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary Class of 1955*  
Earl H. Meissner, 91, of Overland Park, Kan., died Sept. 27. A funeral was held Oct. 1 at Advent Lutheran Church, Olathe, Kan. He served congregations in Iowa and Kansas, and was director of pastoral care at Trinity Lutheran Hospital in Kansas City, Mo. He was preceded in death by his wife Phyllis and a son, and is survived by three children, 11 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

## Todd Charles Napoli

**1971–2020** | *Class of 2000*  
Todd Napoli died June 26 due to multiple organ failure. A live-streamed funeral home service was held, with a larger public gathering to be held in the fall. Napoli served congregations in Joliet, Tinley Park, and Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Darien, Ill. He is survived by his mother, sisters and a brother.

## Gerald Spice

**1947–2020** | *Class of 1975*  
Gerald Spice, 72, of Evanston, Ill., died June 23 from complications due to COVID-19. Spice served congregations in Florida, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Michigan. He was also on the advisory council of the Institute of Liturgical Studies (ILS) at Valparaiso University, and elected to the advisory board in the ELCA's vocation and education unit. A memorial service was Sept. 26 at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Chicago. His ashes were scattered at Sandy Neck Beach on Cape Cod. He is survived by three siblings.

## David Stevens

**1949–2020** | *Class of 1976 Christ Seminary–SemineX, 1987 DMin*  
David Stevens, 71, died June 12. A memorial service was to be held in August. Stevens served congregations in Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, Nebraska and Minnesota; he was also a newspaper writer and designer, and active in community and synodical ministries. He is survived by his wife Bonnie, two children and grandchildren.

## Marvin Eugene Suhr

**1923–2020** | *Class of 1972*  
Marvin E. Suhr, 96, died Sept. 26 in Fremont, Neb. There was a family graveside service. He served parishes in Iowa and Nebraska and worked as a clinical psychologist. He is survived by his wife Virginia, three sons, seven grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. A son preceded him in death.

## Kenneth (Ken) H. Swanberg

**1930–2020** | *Augustana Theological Seminary Class of 1956, PhD 1977*  
Ken Swanberg, 90, died Sept. 18 at Silvis, Ill. Private family services were held due to COVID. He was seminary pastor at Messiah Lutheran in Assiniboia, Sask., Canada, and served parishes in New Jersey, Michigan and Illinois. In Chicago he was a member and later the vice president of the South Shore Commission, included in Mayor Daley's initiative to facilitate the restoration of community peace amidst the late 1960s unrest. He was preceded in death by his wife Josephine and is survived by four children, 14 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

## Christine J. Thompson

**1955–2020** | *Class of 2007*  
Christine J. Thompson, 65, Madison, Wis., died Oct. 23 at Agrace HospiceCare. A celebration of her life will be held later in the spring. She was a part of the TRACE Center at UW–Madison that developed augmentative communication and computer access for individuals with disabilities, improving the lives of millions around the world. She was owner, operator and textile arts teacher at Weaving Workshop. She also founded the Personal Essentials Pantry, which grew into the Pepartnership, serving more than 13,000 households in Wisconsin and New York. Thompson was preceded in death by her parents and is survived by her siblings.



# Cheryl Stewart Pero made ELCA history

**C**heryl Stewart Pero, 69, known by so many alumni of LSTC as “Mama Cheryl,” died Oct. 28 after becoming ill and hospitalized on Oct. 14. She was surrounded by family and friends at Advocate Christ Medical Center in Oak Lawn, Ill., when she died. An online memorial service was scheduled for Nov. 14. Esther Menn, academic dean, called her “a trusted mentor, warm friend, fierce advocate and dedicated pastor.”

Pero made ELCA history twice—in 1980 as the second African American woman to become ordained in the Lutheran Church of America (LCA), a predecessor to the ELCA, and when she became the first African American Lutheran woman to earn the doctor of philosophy degree in biblical studies, which she received from LSTC.

Pero was LSTC’s pastor to the community in 2009–2010. At the time, she credited the African American Lutheran community and the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) for encouraging and supporting her as she studied and wrote. “I did this as much for them as for myself,” she said.

“We will deeply miss her warmth, wisdom and joyful voice and laughter,” Menn said. “We honor her work as director of the Pero Multicultural Center, including her tireless support and advocacy on behalf of students of color and international students, and her development of ethnic-specific ministry emphases in coordination with the ELCA.” She noted that Pero went from being a student in the PhD program in New Testament to the instructor of a popular course on Multicultural Biblical Interpretation.

Since Pero grew up in the

Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, she assumed she wouldn’t be a pastor. But during her Lutheran year at LSTC (while a student at Andover–Newton Theological Seminary) she became connected to “Lutherans in general” and the LCA in particular. She served in the LCA office, in parishes in Chicago and in campus ministry, was a convener of CIBL, and in 2010 became director of LSTC’s Pero Multicultural Center, named for her late husband, Albert “Pete” Pero. She retired in 2017.

Priscilla Austin, a pastor in Seattle, said, “Cheryl was a mentor, elder and an approachable icon to me. She had a capacity to see possibility in me before I did. She had a way of drawing out what was hidden within us. She showed me how to be strategic, with my energy, in my life, but especially in the church. I’ll be forever grateful for her voice in my head, telling me I can do anything and that I belong in any and every room. I am heartbroken at her passing, but also so happy for her, that she is reunited with her beloved, Pete. I can just see them kicking back with Jesus and having a grand ole time.”

A 2010 *Epistle* story about Pero noted that “trusting the advice of others” was a recurring theme in her life. But from the avalanche of testimonials on social media following her death, many were equally appreciative of the advice she gave.

David Petersen, a pastor in Belvidere, Ill., wrote on Facebook how influential Pero’s High Tea was (it featured Refectory sandwiches for hungry students): “The sense of welcome she conveyed offset the awkward feelings I had as I struggled to find my place at school.



Cheryl Stewart Pero made ELCA history twice—first by being ordained, then by receiving her PhD.

The conversations at teatime were an extension of the academic classroom that prepared us for future engagement in the world... Cheryl honored me as a witness at my ordination. She stands tall and bold in my formation. So full of grace and wisdom.”

Richard J. Perry Jr. and Pero were friends since 1976–77 when they overlapped as students at LSTC, and eventually became colleagues. Their relationship was like brother and sister, he said, partly because of the way they debated issues: “It was invigorating to be in conversations with Cheryl.”

“She practiced hospitality with a deep love for being with a variety of people. She and Pete opened their home, especially to international students. There was always a lot of happiness and celebration... It all reflected her faith and her understanding of who she was and her faith in Jesus Christ... Our church is going to be at a loss. We won’t have her voice reminding us about what we’re called to do.” 🌸

# Colleagues remember Paul Landahl's influence on LSTC

**P**aul Landahl, 82, who served LSTC as coordinator of candidacy from 2008 to 2017, died Aug. 31 surrounded by his family. His pastor at Ascension Lutheran Church in Riverside, Ill., Chris Honig, said Landahl's health had declined in recent months due to an undiagnosed illness.

Landahl was born in 1938 to Swedish immigrants. He was a graduate of Valparaiso University and Concordia Seminary. His lifetime of ministry came in many forms: mission developer, a parish minister, an associate to the bishop, bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, and finally as coordinator of candidacy for LSTC. As evidence of his continual fight for LGBTQ inclusivity, he led the synod in becoming a Reconciling in Christ synod during his tenure as bishop. The faculty's confidence and gratitude for his life of service led the faculty to award one of the highest honors the faculty is privileged to give: The Confessor of Christ Award in 2016.

Philip Hougen, former synodical bishop and former president of LSTC, called Landahl "wise, compassionate and a truth-teller... a man of faith, compassion and integrity." As bishops in Region 5, they became friends. Landahl arrived at LSTC first, and Hougen said he immediately recognized his friend's contributions to LSTC.

"He was extremely helpful to students dealing with the sometimes confusing processes of candidacy and synodical assignments for first calls," he said. "Because of Paul's experience as a synodical bishop, and because of the high regard in which he was held by other bishops, he was an



Philip Hougen, former synodical bishop and former president of LSTC, called Paul Landahl, above, "wise, compassionate and a truth-teller... a man of faith, compassion and integrity."

extremely effective advocate for LSTC students in their interactions with candidacy committees and bishops. Everybody knew they could trust Paul; students, faculty and synodical staff knew his integrity and his love for the church. He was an especially effective advocate for LGBT candidates for ministry when that was not a value shared by all."

Kadi Billman, John H. Tietjen Professor of Pastoral Ministry; Pastoral Theology, Emerita, said Landahl brought his rich experience as a pastor and bishop to his role at LSTC.

"Because he advocated so passionately and persuasively for the inclusion of those most vulnerable to marginalization in the church and world in those critical roles, LSTC students trusted his counsel and guidance as their representative in the candidacy process," Billman said. "Paul

brought humor, forthrightness and skill to his ministry. He would often be found in the Refectory sharing a meal and laughter with staff, faculty and students. 'I love it here!' was his mantra."

Marji Shannon, associate director of contextual education, also marveled at the wealth of knowledge he brought with him to the LSTC.

"He enjoyed sitting down one-on-one with students and learning about their call to ministry and hearing how their journey was unfolding... He took his job as a bridge between students and their candidacy committees seriously and was a strong advocate for our students going through the first call assignment process."

Landahl was preceded in death by his wife, Carolyn, in 2010 and is survived by their children, who are planning a memorial service for when it is safe to do so. ❁



**Javier (Jay) Alanis**, executive director at the Lutheran Seminary program of the Southwest, preached at LSTC during Latinx History Month, and taught the Episcopal Latinx Ministry Competency course. He also: preached at Proyecto Santiago, a ministry in Austin, Texas, and at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Manhattan; taught a TEEM course on pastoral arts; and a "Serving the neighbor during the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918" class in Houston; did a podcast with Barbara Cox for "40 minutes of faith"; reviewed *Mayflower Chronicles: A Tale of Two Cultures* by Kathy Hauelsen, *Introducción al Nuevo Testamento* by Mark Allan Powell, *Stories from Global Lutheranism: A Historical Timeline* by Martin Lohrmann, and *The Bend of the River* by Edward Rickford.

**Kathleen D. (Kadi) Billman**, professor emeritus of pastoral theology, represented LSTC at the installation of the new dean and vice president of academic affairs at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary; represented the seminary at ELCA assignment consultations and gave a webinar for rostered ministers on Tending to One's Own Grief and Tending to the Grief of Parishioners for the Northern Illinois Synod.

**Erik Christensen**, pastor to the community and director of worship, contributed to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* supplement *All Creation Sings*, ELCA & Augsburg Fortress 2020; writer and project-reviewer with special roles for content curation in sections related to health and healing.

**Philip Hefner**, professor emeritus of systematic theology and senior fellow, Zygon Center for Religion and Science, published *A Matter of Waiting: Poems of My Life*; presented via Zoom "A call for imagination in critical times" for Institute on Religion in an Age of Science, and "Writing Humanity's Next Chapter: Religion and Science in the Present Moment" for Center for Science in Religion and Science and LSTC.

**Antje Jackelén**, distinguished affiliate professor of systematic theology/religion and science, published the English translation of *Gud är större, God is greater: Theology for the World* (Fortress Press, January 2020), *Impatient in Hope: Theological questions in the shadow of the pandemic* [in Swedish] (Svenska bibelsällskapet) 2020.

**Ralph Klein**, Christ Seminary-Seminex professor emeritus of Old Testament, reviewed "A Festschrift in Honor of Rami Arav. 'And they came to Beth-saida...'" edited by Fred Strickert and Richard Freund in *Currents in Theology and Mission* Vol 41, No. 3 (July, 2020) 83-84.

**James Lee** (visiting scholar) presented "The Political vs. the Theological: Arendt and Bonhoeffer on Forgiveness" at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.

**David M. Rhoads**, professor emeritus of New Testament, published "Losing Life for Others in the Face of Death: Mark's Standards of Judgment" and "Jesus and the Syrophoenician Woman in Mark: A Narrative-Critical Study" in *Currents in Theology and Mission* Vol 47 No 4 (October, 2020) 36-48.



**Benjamin Stewart**, Gordon A. Braatz Associate Professor of Worship, gave two lecture-discussions for the University of Minnesota's Lutheran Campus Ministry, "Church Broken (Open)" on being church during the pandemic and the national uprisings for justice; published "The Earth We Carry: Cooperation and Tactility in Funeral Practices" in *Fully Conscious, Fully Active: Essays in Honor of Gabe Huck*, ed. Bryan Cones and Stephen Burns, Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications, 2020;

"Wisdom's Buried Treasure: Ecological Cosmology in Funeral Rites," *Full of Your Glory: Liturgy, Cosmos, Creation*, ed. Teresa Berger, Liturgical Press, 2019; *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* supplement *All Creation Sings*, ELCA & Augsburg Fortress, 2020; writer, project-reviewer, with special roles for content curation in sections related to ecology and environment. "Little Apocalypse: How Green Funeral Practitioners Reconfigure the Iconography of Climate Catastrophe" in *Currents in Theology and Mission* Vol 41, No. 3 (July 2020) 58-62.

**Linda E. Thomas**, professor of theology and anthropology, gave three lectures for the Northern Illinois Synod online event, "Lutheranism and #BlackLivesMatter: Intersecting Faith and Democracy from a Womanist Lens." Published "Theologi, Anthropologi och hopp" in *Tidens Tecken* 4 (2019), 93-103; in Swedish, original English Title: "Theology, Anthropology, and Hope"; "Katie Cannon: Premier Womanist Ethicist, Mentor, and Big Sister" in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 35:2 (Fall 2019):145-147.



**Barbara Rossing**, professor of New Testament and environmental ministry coordinator, was webinar panelist for "Revealing Relationships: Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness" sponsored by ELCA Disaster Response. Rossing may get the award for most beautiful preaching background during this pandemic. She has been a worship reader and preacher from her home in Washington state, including for the Lutherans Restoring Creation worship service that involved hundreds of congregations. She also preached that sermon for the LSTC community and it can be found (along with those of other preachers) on LSTC's YouTube channel and on SoundCloud.

## 1965

**Donald Fulz** (Augustana Lutheran Seminary, MDiv) moved into the independent living area of Boutwells Landing in the Stillwater, Minn., area.

## 1969

**John Krahn** (Concordia Seminary/Christ Seminary–Seminex, MDiv) has expanded his message to YouTube with the video “Living a Happier Life at Every Age.”

## 1971

**David E. Nelson** (MDiv; 1977, DMin) recently received several awards: Eggs and Enlightenment Civic Activist, Bethany College Alumni Award of Merit, and the Kansas City Royals “Buck” O’Neal Legacy Award. He remains active in Greater Kansas City Interfaith Community and as part of The Human Agenda LLC Appreciative Inquiry Coach.

## 1978

**David Preisinger** (MDiv) retired last year after 41 years of ministry. He served congregations in Syracuse and Utica, N.Y., before joining the synod staff for 25 years. He then served half-time in an Albany, N.Y., congregation for nine years. The pandemic has delayed his retirement travel plans.

## 1984

**Paul Egensteiner** (MDiv) was elected to the board of trustees of Wagner College, Staten Island, N.Y. He serves as bishop of the Metropolitan New York Synod.

**Karen (Norman–Trost) Norman–Rees** (MDiv) is now under call in the Northern Illinois Synod after spending 30 years in the Central/Southern Illinois Synod. She has served as a surgical/open heart chaplain, in mental health hospitals for the State of Illinois, as campus pastor at Illinois State University. She spent the last four years called to ministry in the Illinois Department of Corrections in female and male prisons. She is currently serving at Hill Correctional Center in Galesburg, Ill.

## 1990

**Lisa Dahill** (MDiv) is professor of religion at California Lutheran University, teaching ecological theology and ethics, Bonhoeffer, and spirituality and the arts, along with the Intro to Religion course. She is also passionate about the Wild Church Network, a community that was worshipping outdoors long before the pandemic. She is working on a book that gives a contemporary ecological reading to Bonhoeffer’s vision of God and world integrated into “one reality” in Jesus Christ.

**Robert M. Palan** (DMin) retired Oct. 4. He served Immanuel Lutheran Church, La Vernia, Texas, for the past 18 years. He previously served congregations in Fort Worth, Waco, and Austin during his 42 years of ordained ministry.

## 1991

**Steve Edmiston** (MDiv) began a new call at St. John Lutheran Church, Sidney, Ohio. He served for 13 years as pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Jenera, Ohio.

**Cheryl (Meese) Peterson** (MDiv) recently published, “Does the Church Still Matter? A Lutheran Perspective on the Church’s Relevance Today” in *Word & World* 40. n. 1 (2020). She attended and gave a paper last fall at the Lutheran World Federation consultation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, “We believe in the Holy Spirit: Global Perspectives on Lutheran Identities,” and this year concludes a five-year appointment by the LWF Church Council to the International Lutheran Dialogue Commission with the Pentecostals. She is under contract to write a book with Baker Academic Press on the Holy Spirit in the Christian life. She currently holds the Trinity Endowed Chair in Mission and Ministry and is professor of systematic theology and associate dean for academics at Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University.

## 1995

**Felicia Campbell** (MDiv) founded and has served at Love, Faith and Hope Lutheran Church in the Englewood New City Community of Chicago for the past 25 years. She has been leading For Your Consciousness, a nonprofit that includes a weekly food pantry, and recently added an internet radio station called Conscious Internet Radio.

## 1996

**Robin Currie** (MDiv; 2004, DMin) won Serious Writer Book of the Decade award for her book *The Very Best Story Ever Told: The Gospel with American Sign Language*. The presentation was held in Nashville, Tenn., Aug. 20. In her book, each line of this story includes important words reinforced with American Sign Language. The book was also a finalist for the 2019 Selah Award, earned First Place, Wright Medal, North Carolina Christian Writers Conference 2019, and was included in the Focus on Family Top 10 Family Friendly Picture Books 2019. She is pastor associate at St. Luke Lutheran, Glen Ellyn, Ill., and priest associate at Trinity Episcopal, Wheaton, Ill.

**Jayaprakash Sabbithi** (DMin) became pastor of Joy of Christ Lutheran Church, Pearl City, Hawaii, after working in health care for 31 years.

## 1998

**Jennifer Thomas** (MDiv) is serving as interim pastor of St. Matthew’s and St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in the Central States Synod.

## 1999

**Betty Krafft** (MDiv) retired May 31, 2019, and was enjoying travelling until COVID-19 hit. She is also engaged in antiracism work.

**Sharon Stalkfleet** (MDiv) is working on a doctor of ministry degree at Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley. She is listed on the historic Proclaim Roster of Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries.



Kara (Skatrud) Baylor (2000, MDiv) is using her voice in a blog called #PissedOffPastor.

## 2000

Kara (Skatrud) Baylor (MDiv) started the blog Pissed Off Pastor in response to the killing of George Floyd. Colleagues across the country are wearing and sharing photos of themselves

in her #PissedOffPastor t-shirts. She also was a guest on the Lady Preacher podcast. The title of her episode is “#PissedOffPastor: Righteous Anger at Racial Injustice.” Listen at [dancingpastor.org/ladypreacher](https://dancingpastor.org/ladypreacher).

## 2001

**Patricia Gerber Bornholt** (MA) instead of retiring became deacon emeritus at Lutheran Church of the Master, Carol Stream, Ill.

**Diane Olson** (MDiv) was installed as pastor of Christ the Servant Lutheran Church, Waukesha, Wis., December 2019.

**Marianne Tomecek** (MDiv) serves as interim pastor serving Grace Lutheran Church, Uniondale, N.Y., and the Lutheran Church of the Epiphany ~ Iglesia Luterana de la Epifania, Hempstead, N.Y.

## 2003

**Janelle (Rozek) Hooper** (MDiv) published “Encourage wonder” in the August *Living Lutheran*.

**Cheryl Pero** (ThM; 2010, PhD) appeared on the Lady Preacher podcast hosted by Kelsey Beebe. Listen at [dancingpastor.org/ladypreacher](https://dancingpastor.org/ladypreacher).

**Chris Wheatley** (MDiv) has been named senior director of pastoral care at Presbyterian Homes and Services (PHS) in St. Paul, Minn.

## 2004

**Michael Fick** (MDiv) contributed the Aug. 9 “Living in the Word” to *The Christian Century*.

## 2005

**Melinda Pupillo** (MDiv) has been appointed campus chaplain at Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill. She begins her new call in January. She has been serving as pastor at Holden Village.

## 2006

**Steven Cauley** (MDiv) began a new call as pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, Lake St. Louis, Mo., on Sept. 20.

**Sara Olson–Smith** (MDiv) was featured on WHBF TV “Living Local” program on July 28. She talked about how the pandemic has affected the ministry of her congregation, St. Paul Lutheran Church in Davenport, Iowa.



**Amy Lindeman Allen** (MDiv) published “Baptism and Children in Mark’s Vision of the Realm of God” and contributed preaching helps for the 20th and 21st Sundays after Pentecost in the October issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission* (Vol 47 No 4).

## 2008

**Jason Bense** (MDiv) was commissioned as a chaplain in the United States Air Force Reserve, serving at Travis Air Force Base. He has completed the Basic Chaplain Course and Total Force Officer Training. He serves Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer and Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Sacramento, Calif.



Angela Khabeb (2009, MDiv) was featured on Good Morning America’s Faith Friday. The Minneapolis congregation she serves is near the site of George Floyd’s murder and has been instrumental in protesting and healing in that neighborhood.

## 2009

Angela Khabeb (MDiv) was featured on Good Morning America’s Faith Friday on July 24. She spoke about the food distribution ministry of her congregation, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Minneapolis. She also gave an update on the church’s effort to raise \$100,000 for a justice fund to assist neighbors and businesses in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. Her reflection, “Fire in my bones,” was published in the August *Living Lutheran*.

## 2010

**Dan Hille** (MDiv) edited a worship companion for people unable to connect virtually to worship. The companion provided a full ordo for August through November. Contributors included synod and churchwide staff, an ELCA bishop, non-Lutheran and active and retired pastors from 13 different synods. Twelve other LSTC alumni contributed to the companion: **R. Adam Berndt** (2010, MDiv), **Jason Chesnut** (2010, MDiv), **Yehiel Curry** (2009, TEEM; 2013, MDiv), **Carolyn Albert Donovan** (2012, MDiv), **Dominic Guido** (2012, MDiv), **Matthew Kamprath** (2010, MDiv), **Travis Meier** (2013, MDiv), **Paul Moody** (2012, MDiv), **Jeffrey Schlesinger** (2012, MDiv), **Kjersten Priddy Sullivan** (2012, MDiv), **Justin Thornburgh** (2012, MDiv), **Eric Wooldridge** (2010, MDiv).

**Krista Zimmerman** (MDiv) appeared on the Lady Preacher podcast with Kelsey Bebee. The title of her episode is “Finding Peace Behind Closed Doors.” Listen at [dancingpastor.org/ladypreacher](https://dancingpastor.org/ladypreacher). She is associate pastor of Mount Pleasant Lutheran Church, Racine, Wis.

## 2012

**Justin Thornburgh** (MDiv) is serving as the co-chair of the American Baptist Churches, USA, antiracism task force. Its purpose is to educate and empower the denomination to become antiracist in its ministry and mission and to be a prophetic witness to the larger community.

## 2014

**Rebekkah Lohrmann** (MDiv) is quoted in the August *Living Lutheran* article, “The spirituality of natural burials.”

## 2015

**Nayoung Ha** (ThM; 2019, PhD) received the Distinguished Alumni Award from McCormick Theological Seminary during its October McCormick Days.

**Kwame Pitts** (MDiv, 2015; current student in the Ecumenical DMin program) recently collaborated with colleagues on an article for the online *Political Theology Network*. It is available at [politicaltheology.com](https://politicaltheology.com).

**Sara (Suginaka) Yoos** (MDiv) was a guest on the Lady Preacher podcast ([dancingpastor.org/ladypreacher](https://dancingpastor.org/ladypreacher)). The title of the podcast is “Racism, the Pandemic and Where Is Jesus.” She is pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Menomonee Falls, Wis.

## 2016

**Baiju Markose** (ThM; 2019, PhD) became the dean of Dharma Jyoti Vidya Peeth Seminary, Faridabad, India, where he also teaches.

## 2018

**Josh Evans** (MDiv) began a new call as pastor of St. Philip Lutheran Church, Glenview, Ill., Aug. 10.

**Preston Carter Fields** (MDiv) and his husband Wesley Lyons welcomed their son, Neyland Anderson Lyons-Fields on July 14.



Preston Carter Fields (2018, MDiv) and Wesley Lyons with their son, Neyland.

**Meagan Tee** (MDiv) and her husband, Tee Sieng Bros, welcomed Sacha Joseph into the world on Sept. 23. Sacha means “promise” in Khmer.

## 2019

**Vinod Wesley** (ThM) published the book *Church and Climate Justice*. It is jointly published by Council for World Mission (CWM) and ISPCK (Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge).

## 2020

**Corey Bergman** (MDiv) was ordained Oct. 2 at Holy Family Lutheran Church, Chicago. He is serving as pastor of St. John Lutheran Church and St. Christopher Episcopal Church in Linthicum, Md.

**Ian Coen-Frei** (MDiv) was ordained Aug. 29 at Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, Isanti, Minn. He is serving as pastor of Faith.

**Makayla Dahleen** (MDiv) was ordained Oct. 11 at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Sterling, Ill., where she has been called to serve as pastor.

**Tammy Jackson** (MA) was quoted in the September *Living Lutheran* article, “A source of light,” about the ELCA’s global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. She is senior director for mission formation for the ELCA.

**Elle Dowd** (MDiv) participated in a panel discussion on Aug. 24 on how faith leaders can advocate for public health. The virtual panel discussion was sponsored by Faith in Place Action Fund and Southsiders Organized for Unity and Liberation.

**David Rebey** (MDiv) was ordained Sept. 19 at Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church, Sussex, Wisc. He is serving as pastor of Redemption Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wauwatosa, Wis.

**José Rodríguez Páez** (MDiv) was ordained Oct. 11 at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Elgin, Ill. He is serving as a mission developer for a new Latinx ministry in the Elgin area.

**Madeline (Maddie) Tallman** (MDiv) was ordained Oct. 18 at Mar Lu Ridge Camp and Retreat Center, Jefferson, Md. She serves as pastor of Rejoice Fellowship, Glen Burnie, Md.

## Future Alumni

**Troy Spencer** was featured in an Aug. 27 article in the *Alpena News*, “New St. Paul vicar shares stories of trips to Holy Land.”

**Paisley Le Roy** was ordained Oct. 25 at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, St. Charles, Ill., where she now serves as associate pastor.

**Remy Remmers** was ordained Oct. 10 at King of Glory Lutheran Church, Dallas, Texas, and now serves as pastor of Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Prineville, Ore.

## Godspeed

**Tim Brown** resigned from his position as major gifts officer in September. He had joined Advancement's philanthropic engagement team in July 2019, working from his home in Raleigh, N.C., where he now serves as director of special gifts at Methodist Home for Children. Brown is a 2009 MDiv graduate of LSTC. "Tim has brought a fun-loving and humorous spirit to the work of donor engagement... he led the way in gift officer productivity, reaching out to numerous donors and alumni and working ambitiously to close gifts that lead to scholarships, student assistance, and endowments that will support LSTC for many years to come," said William Myatt, director of philanthropic engagement.

**Matthew James** resigned from his position as admissions director in October, which he began in September 2016. He accepted a call to serve as pastor of Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Racine, Wis. "Matt guided the admissions team through multiple transitions, most notably the complex overhaul of Jenzabar to Blackbaud as well as making the work of LSTC's recruitment more accessible to virtual audiences," said Scott Chalmers, dean of student services. "Matt was a tireless recruiter who knew how to build relationships and lift up LSTC's distinctive context. We know in his new call he will continue to lift up leaders for the church."

## Hein-Fry lecture: 'Look for the women'

**K**arl Anliker, a senior MDiv student, represented LSTC in the annual Hein-Fry Book of Challenge (HRBFC) lecture



Karl Anliker

on Oct. 28.

Each year, one student from each ELCA-affiliated seminary is invited to create a class, encounter, or series for

people who are both steeped in biblical texts as well as those unfamiliar with them, and report their learnings. This year four students gave their presentations online. Susan Briehl, Spokane, Wash., was online host and moderator of a panel of academic and church leaders.

The HRBFC is sponsored by seminaries of the ELCA, the Hein-Fry planning team and the Book of Faith Initiative. This year's theme was "The Bible—Word Not Weapon."

Anliker conducted his four-session Bible study focusing on women of the Bible via Zoom while on internship at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Hinsdale, Ill. He said the study was inspired by Professors Linda Thomas and Esther Menn and their teaching in the Women in Genesis class. "In that class we wrote blessings for the women of Genesis, a practice I directly adopted in this congregational study," he said. 🌸

## Vine Deloria Jr. Symposium, Nov. 17-18

**D**avid Martinez, associate professor of American Indian Studies at Arizona State University and the author of *Life of the Indigenous Mind: Vine Deloria Jr and the Birth of the Red Power Movement*, is guest speaker. He will discuss Vine Deloria Jr.'s historical significance and ongoing relevance to today's Native American sovereignty movements, with particular focus

on his work at the intersection of environmental justice, tribal sovereignty, and tribal rights. A panel discussion on the second evening will explore the legacy of Vine Deloria, Jr.'s activism and scholarship. Dallas Goldtooth (Mdewakanton Dakota & Diñe) and Kyle Whyte (Potawatomi), will speak to the relationship of people to land that is woven throughout Deloria's work. 🌸

## Chris Huang new director of institutional effectiveness, registrar

**C**hris Huang joined LSTC in August as director of institutional effectiveness and registrar. He brings 14 years of experience serving as a registrar, overseeing student records, registration, course scheduling and catalog production.

Huang's



Chris Huang

two key interests are using and implementing technology to streamline processes and actively participating in strategic planning initiatives.

"The Registrar's Office is a hub that uniquely bridges the academic and administrative sides of an institution," he said. "I look forward to designing collaborative processes for LSTC offices to work together effectively, alongside identifying ways that data can provide insights to improve our seminary." 🌸

## World Mission Institute March 11

**T**he World Mission Institute is March 11, with Peter Phan, Ignacio Ellacuria S. J., chair of Catholic Social Thought, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. His topic is "Migration, Mission and Spirituality." Format will be announced in February. 🌸





MDiv students Ashley and Dalton Rosa-Ruggieri were married in Augustana Chapel in October by Pastor Erik Christensen and with a virtual crowd watching and cheering them on. They met at LSTC and even a pandemic couldn't stop their wedding.



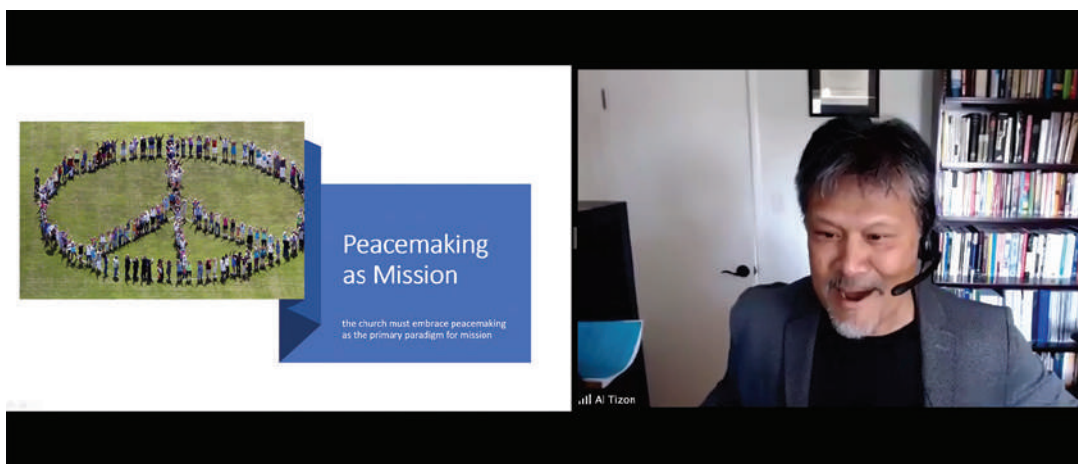
President James Nieman preaches during worship/opening convocation of the 2020-21 academic year.



The Refectory team has been feeding the community (LSTC and Hyde Park) throughout this pandemic in partnership with GrubHub. To celebrate Oktoberfest, they rolled out a delicious menu, with team members like Renee Fisher (above) cooking.



MDiv student Melissa Hrdlicka made our social media numbers go through the roof last summer when we shared this photo of her after preaching at her home congregation, Ascension Lutheran Church in Green Bay, Wis.



Four generations of the Scherer family were able to attend the Scherer Lecture this year, thanks to it being on Zoom. Speaker Al Tizon's lecture, "Peacemaking as Mission: Challenging Racism Near and Far," is available on LSTC's YouTube channel. More than 100 people attended.





# Lutheran School of Theology *at* Chicago

1100 East 55th Street | Chicago, IL 60615

[www.lstc.edu](http://www.lstc.edu)

*Address Service Requested*

In October there were several ways to honor and celebrate Latinx month, including a Zoom and live-streamed panel discussion that can be viewed on LSTC's YouTube channel, and a cooking event featuring food and drink for all ages, such as student Krystle Moraska and children.



FALL 2020